Print

Print - Shift

Shift

Op

Seated Chair Exercises & Stretches for Sciatica

By Dr. Michael Derry, DPT, PT, OCS Jacksonville, Florida

Published: March 19, 2025 • Updated: May 10, 2025

Sitting exercises and stretches can reduce sciatica pain, improve nerve mobility, and promote better circulation to the nerve. While movements like standing exercises or walking are also excellent choices, not everyone can tolerate those activities. The good news is that seated exercises can still provide significant relief and improve lower back function. Moving in any way is better than not moving, and the following exercises can help alleviate discomfort. Here are some exercises that help relieve sciatica and it's related pains.

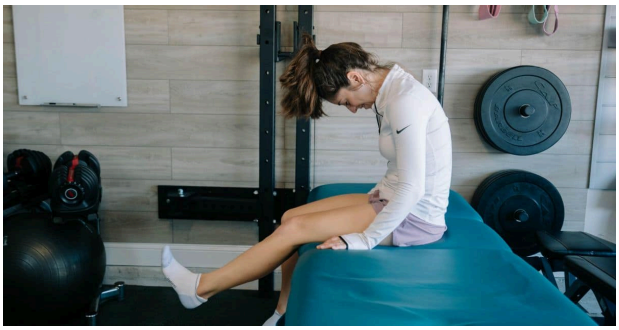
Slump Stretch

This exercise gently mobilizes the sciatic nerve to reduce irritation and pain. You can feel this anywhere from your lower back to your feet.

- Sit at the edge of a chair with your back straight
- Gently round your back, tucking your chin toward your chest.
- Straighten one knee, lifting your foot until you feel a stretch in the back of your leg.
- Hold for 2-3 seconds, then lower your foot. To deepen the stretch, flex your ankle by

By clicking **"Accept All Cookies"**, you agree to the storing of cookies on your device to enhance site navigation, analyze site usage, and assist in our marketing efforts. View our Privacy Policy for more information.

Preferences Deny Accept



Seated Sciatic Nerve Stretch

Slump Stretch Good Posture, and Supported

A modified version of the Slump Stretch that offers a different stretch

- Pull your toes and point your toes while your leg is in the air
- Repeat 20 times on each side.

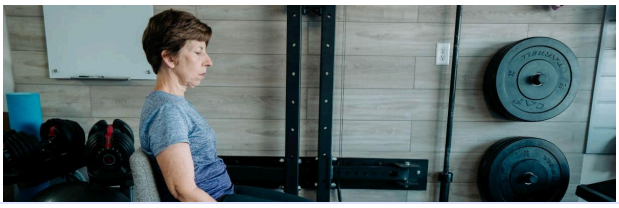
Table of Contents

Finding the Best Sitting Position for Sciatica Relief

Summary

Dr. Michael Derry is a Doctor of Physical Therapy and board certified in orthopedics. He is very passionate about treating

Stretching Sciatic Nerve With Good Posture Toes Pointed



By clicking **"Accept All Cookies"**, you agree to the storing of cookies on your device to enhance site navigation, analyze site usage, and assist in our marketing efforts. View our Privacy Policy for more information.

Preferences Deny Accept

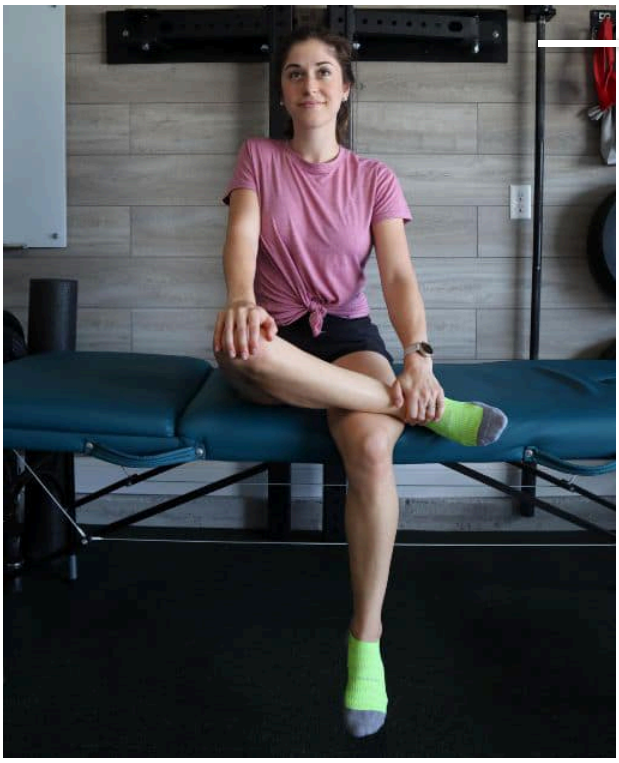
universities as well as managing large clinics before starting his own practice in Jacksonville, FL.

Seated Piriformis Stretch

This stretch targets the piriformis muscle, which can contribute to sciatic nerve irritation.

> First, figure out if you have piriformis syndrome

- Sit on a chair
- Cross one leg over the other, placing the ankle on top of the opposite thigh in a figure-four position.
- Keep your spine neutral and avoid rounding your back.
- Lean forward gently until you feel a stretch in your buttock.
- To increase the stretch, press down slightly on your top knee with your hand.
- Hold for 2-30 seconds and repeat 3 times on each side.



Seated Piriformis Stretch

By clicking **"Accept All Cookies"**, you agree to the storing of cookies on your device to enhance site navigation, analyze site usage, and assist in our marketing efforts. View our Privacy Policy for more information.

Preferences Deny Accept

Though not a seated exercise, this movement is excellent for mobilizing the lower back, hips, and sciatic nerve. Most can do this because you support yourself with a chair.

- Stand with feet **hip-width** apart, knees slightly bent, arms hanging loosely by your sides.
- Hinge forward at the hips (not the waist) until you feel a stretch in the back of your legs. Keep your head and neck relaxed.
- Straighten one knee while letting the same hip shift back, allowing the opposite knee to bend more.
- Hold for 1-3 seconds, then switch legs in a controlled motion.
- Repeat 20 times total

These exercises can be a powerful tool in your recovery, helping to improve flexibility, reduce nerve tension, and promote overall mobility.

Elephant Walk for Sciatic Stretch

Elephant Walk with More Flexion

Finding the Best Sitting Position for Sciatica Relief

By clicking **"Accept All Cookies"**, you agree to the storing of cookies on your device to enhance site navigation, analyze site usage, and assist in our marketing efforts. View our Privacy Policy for more information.

Preferences Deny Accept

Sitting with a Herniated Disc Can Make This Worse

If your sciatica is due to a disc bulge or herniation, maintaining the natural curve of your lower back (lumbar lordosis) is key. Choose firm seating surfaces and avoid overly soft cushions, such as low couches or sling seats, which can force your back into a rounded posture and worsen pain. A lumbar support roll or cushion can help maintain proper spinal alignment—simply place it behind your lower back while sitting. (I earn commission as an amazon affiliate)

Additionally, avoid crossing your legs, as this can increase tension on the lower back and sciatic nerve, potentially worsening symptoms.

Sitting is one of the most aggravating positions for sciatica, mainly when caused by a lumbar disc herniation. Sitting significantly increases pressure on the spine compared to standing or lying down. Over time, prolonged compression weakens the spinal discs, making them more prone to rupture. When a disc herniates, its inner gel-like material protrudes outward, encroaching on nearby nerves, including the sciatic nerve, leading to pain, irritation, and slouching. At the same time, sitting worsens this by further compressing the disc, pushing it backward into the nerve, and intensifying symptoms.

Sitting with Spinal Stenosis Can Feel Really Good

For sciatica caused by spinal stenosis, a slightly rounded or forward-leaning sitting position is often more comfortable. Unlike with a herniated disc, softer seating surfaces may be more tolerable. A lumbar support cushion can still be beneficial, as it helps relax the back muscles and provides proper support. You can just experiment with different seating options to find a neutral yet comfortable position that does not trigger pain.

Understanding the cause of your sciatica and making minor adjustments to your sitting posture can help alleviate discomfort and support your recovery.

Summary

When experiencing a sciatica flare-up, the comfort or discomfort of sitting can vary greatly depending on the underlying cause of your pain and habitual sitting posture. An upright and erect posture generally provides the most relief for those with sciatica due to disc herniations. In contrast, individuals with sciatica caused by spinal stenosis often find a more relaxed, rounded spine position that is more comfortable. Regardless of which position feels best at the beginning of your recovery journey, the ultimate goal remains the same: to improve nerve and spine mobility and gradually restore your ability to maintain a pain-free neutral spine during sitting.

1. Ellis, R., Osborne, S., Whitfield, J., Parmar, P., & Hing, W. (2017). The effect of spinal position on sciatic nerve excursion during seated neural mobilisation exercises: an in vivo study using ultrasound imaging. The Journal of manual & manipulative therapy, 25(2), 98–105. https://doi.org/10.1179/2042618615Y.0000000020

By clicking **"Accept All Cookies"**, you agree to the storing of cookies on your device to enhance site navigation, analyze site usage, and assist in our marketing efforts. View our Privacy Policy for more information.

Preferences Deny Accept

Latest articles.

browse more articles

Our PDF Programs

Search Programs

Filter by Condition

Core Weakness | Sciatica | Spinal Stenosis | Lower Back Pain | Back Surgery

Reset

Pain-Free Walking Calendar

Spinal Stenosis

1	8	Beginner
Exercises	Minutes	Difficulty

Extra Cushion Workout With Sciatica

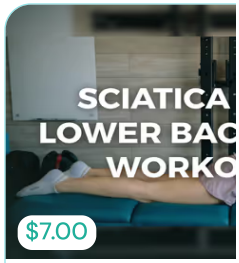
Sciatica

6	20	Beginner
Exercises	Minutes	Difficulty

FREE 24 Core Strengthening Exercises PDF Guide

Core Weakness | Lower Back Pain

24	5/day	Beginner
Exercises	Minutes	Difficulty



Sciatica and Lower Workout

Lower Back Pain | Sciat

5	20
Exercises	Minutes

By clicking **"Accept All Cookies"**, you agree to the storing of cookies on your device to enhance site navigation, analyze site usage, and assist in our marketing efforts. View our Privacy Policy for more information.

Preferences | Deny | Accept

One step closer to a better you.

Schedule now to get the pain relief and health you want without wasting time or money.

New Patient Application

REVISION HEALTH SERVICES
CONCIERGE PHYSICAL THERAPY AND WELLNESS

Resources

- Medical Disclaimer
- Free Resources
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Blog
- Recommended Products
- Good Faith Estimate
- New Stenosis eBook
- Schedule Now
- My New Book!

Services

- Physical Therapy
- Mobile Therapy
- Exercise
- Telehealth
- Massage
- Our PDF Programs

Get in Touch

Consultation

michael@revisionhealthservices.com

Jacksonville, Florida

Nocatee, Florida

Ponte Verda, Florida

Phone: (904) 414-5683

Fax: (904) 914-8732

Meet the Team

Copyright © 2025 Revision Health Services | Terms & Conditions | Sitemap | Privacy Policy

By clicking **"Accept All Cookies"**, you agree to the storing of cookies on your device to enhance site navigation, analyze site usage, and assist in our marketing efforts. View our Privacy Policy for more information.

Preferences Deny Accept